

## **School-business partnerships garnering success**

July 22, 05 – Two programs involving partnerships between school districts and businesses are showing promising results for high school students, including improved student performance, increased postsecondary attendance, lower dropout rates and higher incomes for graduates. A panel representing the Lansing Area Manufacturing Partnership (LAMP) program in Michigan and the Central Education Center in Georgia gave findings from evaluations of their programs at an American Youth Policy Forum July 22. LAMP, a school-to-career program, partners United Auto Workers (UAW), General Motors (GM), and the Ingham School District in Lansing, Michigan, to help high school seniors gain academic and technical skills related to careers in manufacturing.

The program was launched in 1997 and accommodates 60 students every year who learn and work in UAW/GM's Lansing training center, according to Jeffrey Dole, administrator for the partnership. Dole said the program's success is due to a three-prong strategy of a rigorous and relevant curriculum, authentic instruction, and continuous improvements through quality learning. Students from urban and suburban areas are selected based on their interests in manufacturing careers. Once in LAMP, they are immersed in a curriculum that adheres to both state and national academic and technical standards, and is based on solid research on instruction and learning. Participants are taught core academics such as math, science and communication alongside manufacturing and design technology.

To keep the instruction authentic, the academic and technical education courses are taught in a contextual learning format that gives relevancy to the lesson. Students also have an opportunity to explore various careers within manufacturing. Dole said the elimination of ranking, emphasis on personalized learning, and the provision of engaging learning opportunities work to ensure students continue to improve their performance. The results of a two-year longitudinal study of LAMP conducted by the Academy for Educational Development – an independent nonprofit organization – found a number of promising findings, said Connie Thompson, administrator of school-to-work programs at the UAW-GM Center for Human Resources in Detroit, Michigan. Chiefly among them is an increase in the rate LAMP graduates pursue postsecondary credentials, compared to a comparison group and non-LAMP participants, and higher levels of retention when they pursue postsecondary education.

Also, more LAMP graduates were enrolled and working at the same time versus the comparison group, while still maintaining comparable grade point averages. While the average hourly wage for the comparison group rose \$.10 to \$8.86 between 12 to 18 months following high school graduation, LAMP graduates'

months following high school graduation, LAMP graduates' earnings increased \$1.04 to \$11.12 per hour. Thompson added that the skills LAMP graduates garner while in the program – such as teamwork, communication and time-management – are invaluable and much coveted by employers.

Another program, the Central Education Center (CEC), is a five-year-old charter school in Coweta County, Georgia, that partners local business and industry, the county's three public high schools and a technical college. CEC seeks to ensure a viable 21st-century workforce by breaking down barriers between career and technical education and academics, between high school and college, and between education and the workplace, according to Mark Whitlock, CEC's chairman. Students voluntarily enroll for all or part of the academic day at CEC, where they receive heavy doses of applied academics relevant to career areas. Other key characteristics of the program include project-based instruction; community-wide involvement in the program – the school's has 11 advisory boards for its curriculum and 185 business partners, 80 of which offer job-shadowing; dual-enrollment opportunities at West Central Technical College (WCTC) while still in high school; curriculum pathways that lead to technical certificates; and course offerings that reflect the needs of local business and industry.

"We want to be sure we're teaching them things they can get jobs to do, and we also want to make sure that our businesses are successful, said Don Moore, chairman for the Coweta County Chamber of Commerce, and vice chair of CEC's board of directors. The result of the partnership is improved academic performance on high school graduation exit exams for disadvantaged students: science up 21 percent, social studies up 22 percent, and writing up 4 percent. The program's dropout rate has improved by 42 percent from 2000-2003. At age 16, CEC students have the option to simultaneously enroll at WCTC while still in school. For those dual-enrollment students, there is a 98 percent graduation rate, 100 percent placement rate in employment or postsecondary education, and 657 occupational certificates have been earned before students even left high school. With a grant from the Georgia Department of Education, CEC will replicate the project with two new "CECs" in the pipeline.

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